

for storing [therein] a plurality of expert qualifications, each stored expert qualification corresponding to an expert of [for] a plurality of experts, each stored expert qualification being associated with an address corresponding to [a particular] an expert of the plurality of experts;

means for searching the database to identify

an expert corresponding to the requested expert qualification and

an address corresponding to the identified expert [generate a search result

containing expert qualifications which correspond to the end user request];

means for guaranteeing payment to the identified expert [for services rendered to the end user];

means for initiating remittance of payment [payments] to the identified expert [experts];

means for transmitting at least a portion of the end user request to the [expert] address corresponding to the identified expert [based on the search result];

means for receiving an expert answer [corresponding] in response to the end user request [transmitted]; and

means for transmitting at least a portion of the expert answer to the end user.

67. (Amended) An [expert matching] apparatus for managing communications between an expert [having particular qualifications] and an end user [seeking answers to a problem], comprising:

a controller unit for receiving an end user request [generated by] from an end user, the controller unit having a database for storing [therein] a plurality of expert qualifications, each expert qualification corresponding to an expert of a plurality of experts [each expert qualification associated with an address corresponding to a particular expert];

means for selecting [at least one] the end user request for evaluation [by at least one expert];

means for transmitting at least a portion of the end user request to [the] an expert [address] based on the end user request [selection];

means for establishing a price for an expert answer corresponding to the [selected] end user request;

means for guaranteeing payment to the expert for services rendered to the end user in response to the end user request;

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means for receiving the expert answer responsive to the end user request [transmitted];

and

means for transmitting the expert answer to the end user.

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113. (Amended) A [computer implemented expert matching] apparatus for managing communications between an expert [having particular qualifications] and an end user [seeking a solution to an end user request], comprising:

a controller unit for receiving an end user request [generated by] from an end user, the controller unit having a database for storing therein a plurality of expert qualifications, each expert qualification associated with an expert address corresponding to a particular expert;

means for classifying the end user request to determine an end user request classification;

[means for searching the database to generate a search result containing expert addresses which correspond to the end user request classification];

means for searching at least one external database [databases] for [search results containing] an expert address [addresses] which corresponds [correspond] to the end user request classification;

means for searching at least one external database [databases] to identify  
an expert corresponding to the end user request classification and  
an identified expert address corresponding to the identified expert

[for search results containing expert addresses which correspond to the end user request classification];

means for authenticating data communications between the controller unit and the expert;

means for transmitting at least a portion of the end user request to the identified expert  
address [based on the search result];

means for receiving at least one expert answer responsive to the transmitted end user request; and

means for transmitting at least a portion of the expert answer to the end user.

Please add the following new claims 177- 190:

sub 4 177. A method for managing communications between an expert and an end user, comprising the steps of:

receiving a first expert qualification corresponding to a first expert;  
selecting a second expert that has a second expert qualification, the second expert qualification being higher than the first expert qualification;  
transmitting the first expert qualification to the second expert; and  
receiving a signal from the second expert that indicates approval of the first expert qualification.

178. A method for managing communications between an expert and an end user, comprising the steps of:

receiving a first expert qualification corresponding to a first expert;  
selecting a second expert that has a second expert qualification, the second expert qualification being higher than the first expert qualification;  
transmitting the first expert qualification to the second expert;  
receiving a signal from the second expert that indicates approval of the first expert qualification; and  
incorporating identity data of the second expert into a key of the first expert.

179. A method for managing communications between an expert and an end user, comprising:

receiving a first expert qualification corresponding to a first expert;  
submitting the first expert qualification for review by a set of experts that each have a qualification that is higher than the first expert qualification;  
receiving a signal from the set of experts that indicates approval of the first expert qualification;  
receiving an end user request from an end user;  
selecting the first expert based on the end user request;  
transmitting at least a portion of the end user request to the first expert;

receiving an expert answer responsive to the end user request; the expert answer containing information about the second expert; and transmitting the expert answer to the end user.

180. The method of claim 179, further comprising:  
guaranteeing payment to the first expert.

181. The method of claim 180, in which the step of guaranteeing payment comprises:  
requiring the end user to prepay.

182. The method of claim 180, in which the step of guaranteeing payment comprises:  
checking a credit card account.

183. The method of claim 182, in which the step of checking a credit card account is performed before the step of transmitting at least a portion of the end user request to the first expert.

184. The method of claim 182, further comprising:  
establishing a price for the expert answer corresponding to the end user request; and  
if credit available on the credit card account is less than the price of the expert answer,  
requesting that the end user provide a credit card number of another credit card account.

185. A method for managing communications between an expert and an end user, comprising:  
receiving a first expert qualification corresponding to a first expert;  
selecting a second expert that has a second expert qualification, the second expert qualification being higher than the first expert qualification;  
transmitting the first expert qualification to the second expert;  
receiving a signal from the second expert that indicates approval of the first expert qualification;  
receiving an end user request from an end user;  
selecting the first expert based on the end user request;